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## THEORY OF TARIFF PROTECTION.

Speech of Mr. Owen, of Indiana.

In the House of Representatives, April 22, 1844.

[The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having taken up the tariff bill recently reported from the Committee of Ways and Means.]

Mr. OWEN said:

On the 20th of August, in the year 1842, a certain bill

received the presidential approval, and became a law.

It was called "An act to provide revenue from imports."

On its face, and by its name, it was a revenue bill. In effect,

it was a necessary and admitted part of the revenue system.

It contained the legal machinery of a system, centuries old in other countries, but modern in this;

a singular system, and founded on a singular idea; the idea, that taxes, so they be indirect and paid in a

custom house, are, and necessarily are, levied in a position

good, to the people taxed. The advocates of this system

which they have strangely chosen to call *American*, contend,

that industry is best fostered, and skill most effectively

encouraged, by taxation. In the days of the Boston

parties, and for a quarter of a century thereafter, it was

a doctrine found small favor in the eyes of republicans.

It remained for modern ingenuity to discover, that it

benefits a nation to tax it after any fashion beyond the

limit of the revenue necessary for its government. The

Committee of Ways and Means of this House, dissenting

from that theory, have reported a bill, now under discussion,

framed so as to effect a gradual return to the old

revenue principles of Washington and Jefferson's administration.

I rise, at the risk of repeating what you have heard often

and better said before, but truth will bear repetition, and

sometimes requires it—I rise briefly to debate the claims

and merits of the system it is thus proposed to abrogate.

Protection is the chief duty of a government

owed to its citizens; protection, as the gentleman from

New York (Mr. McKim) in his minority report, truly says, not to life and limb and liberty alone,

but to property and to the means of acquiring property.

Liberty, police, and justice, are the duties of a government

owed to its citizens; but property, and the means of acquiring

it, are the duties of a government owed to its citizens; and

it is the duty of a government to protect its citizens in the

possession of their property, and to protect them from the

invasion of their property by other citizens, and from the

invasion of their property by foreign nations. It is the duty

of a government to protect its citizens in the possession of

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by foreign nations. It is the duty of a government to

protect its citizens in the possession of their property,

descends, and thus effectually sweeps it out."

The lady—she was a kind old soul—the poor good

what a cruel thing to do! The man of ropes and brushes

was poked for a moment, but true genius is never without

a moment's pause. And he, unconsciously adopting

the very words of a celebrated ancient philosopher, under

similar circumstances, "I have found it!" "Well,"

said the lady, "if your ladyship thinks it would be

better to drop a gross down the chimney—a couple of

dollars, just as I do, and let the poor man suffer in

the street, than to let him suffer in the street, and

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But who, in yere dew, pays the tobacco tax imposed

by the British tariff? Who! The same, who pays the

window-tax, and the bread tax, and a thousand other

taxes; the same from whose capacious pocket are taken

year after year, two hundred and fifty millions of dollars,

to jamper a king and pension an aristocracy. John Bull,

the patient, the tax-paying, the every time he smokes

a cigar, or inhales a pinch of snuff, or indulges

in a quid of tobacco—he and only pays it. The govern-

ment levies the tax, and upon him—not upon the

American planter, not upon the importer or the retailer—

but upon him, the consumer, falls the enormous

burden of the tax. He is the one who pays it, and

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in a precisely like manner, ever rising after rain. We

agree to pay, in an indirect form for their advantage, twenty